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Inside Washington

President Shifts On SALT II

President Reagan's announcement last week that he will no longer be bound by SALT II is a clear-cut victory for the hawks inside his Administration. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, CIA Director William Casey, and ACDA Director Kenneth Adelman come out as winners. Two GOP senators — Jim McClure (Idaho) and Dan Quayle (Ind.) — also played central roles in persuading the President to finally junk the treaty he once denounced as "fatally flawed," but has kept honoring throughout his more than five years in office.

Insiders report that Secretary of State George Shultz and his chief arms control adviser, Paul Nitze, were adamantly against the President's decision, (partly clouded with certain ambiguous remarks from Administration sources). Shultz "furiously" fought the change, says an insider, a change the President apparently did not fully agree to until two weeks ago.

But the President's May 27 statement strongly suggests that U.S. defense policy will no longer be so firmly tied to the SALT II treaty.

Given continuing — and major — Soviet violations, said the President, "I have determined that, in the future, the United States must base decisions regarding its strategic force structure on the nature and magnitude of the threat posed by Soviet strategic forces, and not on standards contained in the SALT structure which has been undermined by Soviet non-compliance...."

True enough, there still exists some ambiguity about what the President intends to do in the future. The President, for reasons that he says have to do with military economies, not SALT II constraints, has agreed to retire and dismantle two

Poseidon submarines, which will allow the newest Trident submarine, the *USS Nevada* (sea trials have just been held), to be added to the submarine fleet without violating SALT restrictions. This means the U.S. will still be in observance of the SALT II pact until the U.S. equips its 131st B-52 heavy bomber for cruise missile carriage near the end of the year.

Will the President, some are asking, retire and dismantle some other multiple-warhead missiles so we are still in compliance with SALT II by the end of the year? Some Administration sources are hinting that this may be the case. But the President himself denies it.

In his statement, he bluntly said: "However, given the decision I have been forced to make, I intend at that time [near the end of the year] to continue deployment of U.S. B-52 heavy bombers with cruise missiles beyond the 131st aircraft as an appropriate response without dismantling additional U.S. systems as compensation under the terms of the SALT II treaty."